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ABSTRACT

This profile in outline form examines the English language teaching situation in Finland and the role of English in the Finnish educational system. The following are examined: (1) the role of English as a major foreign language at all levels of education, in business, and in the scientific fields; (2) English instruction at all levels, including continuing education; (3) the make-up of the teaching cadre, most of which consists of Finnish nationals; (4) instructional materials, which are mainly British and American; (5) English outside the educational system, i.e., in private schools, most of which offer English for Special Purposes; (6) British and American support for the teaching of English; and (7) current research into English and English instruction. An appendix examines English literature instruction in Finland. (AM)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE

COUNTRY: Finland

August 1977

1. Role of English

1.1 English is not a general medium of instruction in Finland but it is used in the study of English language at all levels (including the comprehensive school) and is also fairly frequently used by visiting lecturers particularly in the fields of social and behavioural sciences.

1.2 English is the main foreign language in Finland. Because of the vast quantity of scientific material published in English and the consequent high cost of providing translations for relatively small numbers, a large amount of assigned reading matter at tertiary level is in English; particularly for certain of the social and behavioural sciences. The majority of students in university level institutions are required to pass an examination showing they have a working knowledge of written English, (especially scientific English).

1.3 English is used in the field of foreign trade. Great Britain remains one of Finland's major trading partners. Although not used as a medium of communication within Finland, English is sometimes used for business communications between the other Nordic countries.

Since the Second World War English has become the major foreign language in most Finnish educational establishments (primary to tertiary level). In the early 1970s its position was considered so dominating that criticism was levelled against the one-sidedness of Finland's foreign language teaching. Now efforts are being made to widen the scope of foreign language teaching here generally. A Finnish Ministry of Education Committee are examining this situation and are expected to submit a report in June 1978.

2. English within the Educational System

Since the early 1960s the teaching of a first foreign language (which is English in most cases) started in the third grade of the elementary school. This system still continues in the present comprehensive schools. (Comprehensive education includes primary and also secondary level up to Lukio level). At tertiary level English is the major foreign language and special tuition is arranged for those not already able to manage sufficiently well in the language.

2.1 Number of hours per week allocated to the teaching of English at various levels:

i. Comprehensive school - grades 3-6 inclusive 2 hours per week
7-9 inclusive 3 hours per week.

Where English is the second foreign language (that is in under 10% of the cases) it starts at grade 7 with 3 hours per week up to and including the 9th grade.

ii. Lukio - (3 years and roughly similar to UK 6th form colleges) hours are 1st grade 3½; 2nd grade 3; 3rd grade 3½.

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iii. Tertiary level about 2 hours per week (where necessary).

2.2 Formal distinction between English language and English literature.

Within the school system no actual distinction is made between language and literature and English literature is incorporated as an element of the text to be studied at later stages both from the point of view of language and of literary appreciation. Recently the trend seems to be moving away from literature towards more functional forms of the language.

2.3 Principal public examinations - English.

All those pupils taking the school leaving examination (which is a pre-requisite for university entry) must pass an examination in a foreign language, which in 9 cases out of 10 is English. This examination includes listening comprehension, reading comprehension, essay and structure tests. In most universities students are required to take a language examination (pro exercitio) in English. This is in the form of a straight translation from English into Finnish or a reading comprehension test with multiple choice questions.

2.4 Within the school system, an overall high level performance can compensate for a failure mark in the school leaving examination in English. A pro exercitio examination is a requirement however for most university level degree courses.

2.5 In the comprehensive schools and lukios both syllabuses and textbooks are centrally and nationally approved and uniform. Although universities have some freedom in setting out their requirements and, in choice of textbooks in general, they operate on similar lines.

2.6 Kouluhallitus (Central Board of Education) and the provincial school boards both have inspectors whose responsibility it is to see that the agreed principles and syllabuses are observed. The Inspector's main duty however is to give advice and teaching guidance.

2.7 At tertiary level: universities of technology, technical colleges, schools of economics, schools of commerce, etc there is an ESP emphasis.

2.8 Courses in English for adults from beginners to more advanced level are available in the various further education colleges (Workers' Institutes etc), in private schools of English, with Finnish-British Societies, English Clubs and large factories.

3. Teaching Cadre

Within the school system there are sufficient teachers of English to meet the demand. It is expected however that within the next few years the situation will deteriorate from the new teacher's point of view and a certain degree of unemployment cannot be avoided. There is already quite serious unemployment for teachers of foreign languages other than English. Total membership of SUKOL (the Finnish Association for Foreign Language Teachers) was 4082 members in February 1977 and on this same date the English Teachers Association here recorded 2084 members. These figures relate to Finnish teachers of foreign languages only.

3.1 Within the comprehensive and lukio schools the teaching of English is almost entirely the preserve of Finnish nationals although some schools employ the teacher with the local Finn-Brit or English Club for conversation or pronunciation classes. Kouluhallitus encourages them to do this although they do not provide any extra money for the purpose.

3.1.1 At university English department Lektor level the numbers of Finnish lektors to expatriate lektors is roughly 50/50. Assistant Lektor, Docent, Assistant Professor and Professor level are almost exclusively Finnish.

3.1.2 Of the expatriate staff about 90% is British and the remaining 10% expatriate staff of other nationalities (mainly from the USA).

NB. Finnish Law requires that posts in the higher grades of the Civil Service should go to Finnish Nationals. Finnish universities are State owned and consequently staff are civil servants.

3.2 Within the schools the vast majority of teachers are formally qualified with a degree of Hum. kand. (BA) or Fil. kand. (MA), and a degree in Education. In addition teachers must pass an examination in school legislation and complete two terms of teacher training (ie one year). Qualifications for teaching at university level do not include any form of teacher training course but applicants for permanent lektor posts must satisfy the institutions of their ability to lecture/teach by giving a demonstration lecture.

NB. In general there are two levels, at Lektor level there are temporary posts, hourly paid posts and permanent posts. At career level there are Assistant Lektors who combine administrative and minor teaching duties with work for a Licenciate or Doctor's degree. The next grade is Docent from whose ranks Assistant Professors are selected and so on to Full Professorships.

3.3 Basic training for teachers within the school system takes place in teacher training institutes and normally lasts one year (2 terms). Some in-service training (on work days) is given each year. The Language Teachers Association sponsor weekend seminars and, together with the Summer Universities and other organisations, vacation courses. These are all attended on a voluntary basis.

3.4 The Association of Teachers of English in Finland (which is part of SUKOL) have as their main objective the overall furthering of English and the teaching of English in Finland. The Association is concerned with teaching matters and has no say in the field of collective bargaining.

4. Teaching Materials

A large variety of teaching material, at various levels, is available in Finland. In addition to locally produced material there is a wealth of teaching material published in Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

4.1 Finland has no shortage of textbooks or other ELT materials. Certain teaching packs are available within the framework of locally agreed syllabuses and there is also a good choice of additional materials.

4.2 The most commonly used textbook (teaching pack) in the Comprehensive schools is SIIE (Say It In English) published by the Finnish firm Werner Söderström Oy).

4.3 There is increasing use of audio-visual aids (tapes, films, etc). These are mostly produced outside Finland, in Britain, the United States, etc.

4.4 A team has recently been at work on the new syllabus for English at Lukio level and new material (teaching packs) is being compiled by different publishers.

5. English Outside the Education System

There are a number of private commercial schools of English in Finland. The standard of teaching at these schools varies. The possibility of some of them applying for British Council recognition is at present being considered and Kouluhallitus (The National Schools Board) have said they would welcome this since they themselves have no form of inspection for these private schools.

Others actively engaged in teaching English outside the educational system include teachers employed by the Finnish-British Societies, English Clubs and large firms. (A number of these teachers are recruited by the British Council.) The better known private commercial schools of English are possibly

a. The Cambridge School of English
b. The English Centre
c. Inlingua (this school is affiliated to others in Japan, France, etc)
d. Kieliopisto Languista (Affiliated to the International Schools)
e. Linguarama

Most of these schools offer courses in the teaching of English for special purposes (eg, businessmen, airline staff, telephonists, etc etc).

6. British Support for the Teaching of English

In 1971 the British Council in Finland changed its Specialist Tours programme policy. In the past Specialist Tour units were mainly devoted to subjects of general interest; however, since 1971 first priority has been given to a specialist lecturer in English Language Teaching. This was planned in an effort to help Finnish university level departments of English keep up to date with new thought and practice in the study of English Language Teaching. The encouragement given by this ELT Tour, which includes almost all the university level English departments, supplemented by short visits from other ELT specialists to two or three centres, scholarships, visitorships, courses, etc has contributed to a significant change in the teaching of English in the Finnish universities. Whereas in the past the emphasis was mainly on Philology, there is now a strong and very distinct movement towards Applied Linguistics.

6.1 No Council English Language Teaching Staff are involved in the teaching of English in Finland.

About 9 of the lektors in English Departments in Finnish universities were originally recruited to their present posts by the British Council. Approximately 16 others were originally recruited by the Council to a post in Finland (mainly teacher/secretary posts) and later obtained their present post themselves. There is some turnover of personnel each year plus a little fluctuation in numbers, but our present records show that in addition to the numbers above there are about a further 40 native speakers of English holding posts in university level English departments here.

In 1977/78 there will be 12 guarantee contract holders with Finnish-British Societies, English Clubs and Institutions plus a further 3 teachers who originally held Council guarantee contracts. There are also another 16-18 teachers (native speakers of English) with firms, Finnish-British Societies, etc; these are recruited direct or through the Central Committee of Finnish-British Societies.

6.2 The key posts held by British staff in these categories are possibly Helsinki University: Senior Lektor, Kingsley Hart (ex-Teacher/Secretary), Helsinki School of Economics: Senior Lektor, Philip Binham (ex-Teacher/

Secretary), Oulu University: Acting Assistant Professor Malcolm Hicks, Turku University: three Senior Lektors (British Council recruited), Abo Academy: Acting Assistant Professor Roger Sell.

6.3 The main ELT activity of British staff in teaching establishments in Finland is the direct teaching of English. There is also a certain element of advisory work, production of materials, English by radio and television and help with teacher training courses.

6.4 In recent years we have received a new ELT exhibition every 2 years. These exhibitions are shown not only in Helsinki but also in university towns in other parts of Finland.

Apart from the first, a member of ETIC Inspectorate has attended each of the Annual Conferences of English departments in Finnish universities. An effort is made to arrange the dates of the ELT specialist tour to coincide with the Conference dates so that the Specialist Tourist can also make some contribution to the Conference. Whenever possible, the ELT specialist tourist has also contributed to the Spring or Autumn Meetings of the Finnish Association of English Language Teachers. The Council recruited a lecturer for the University of Jyväskylä's first course on Linguistics this summer. The course was so successful that another is planned for Summer 1978.

6.5 In the last 5 years we received visits from: the RSC with their production of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, The Prospect Theatre with PERICLES, Cymni Theatr Cymru with UNDER MILK WOOD and The Actors Company with THE AMAZONS and THE ENTERTAINER. The last two companies played not only in Helsinki but also in Pori.

There is a good market in Finland for British teaching materials: textbooks, tapes and films (including the TV film THE BELLCREST FILE). These are used in the schools as subsidiary material (The Bellcrest File at tertiary level only).

7. American Support for the Teaching of English

The United States Government offer a number of grants to enable Finnish Teachers of English (both at school and university level) to visit educational establishments in the USA. Their Fulbright Lectureships Scheme has now ended however. Until quite recently the USIS provided a lecturer for one of the courses arranged by the Finnish Association of English Language Teachers (as did the British Council). Following some Union agitation connected with increasing prospects of unemployment for language teachers, these courses have been abandoned for the present.

8. General Statement

Efforts to improve the quality of English Language Teaching (both at school and university level) continue. There are plans however to reduce the teaching of English at Lukio (Sixth Form) level by 10%. What effect this (and the language teaching programmes of other countries) will have on the current ELT situation it is difficult to estimate. If the demand for English stays at its present level it may result in a greater demand on the private (commercial) schools of English.

9. Current Research and Bibliography

a. A joint research project on English dialects has been in progress for some years between the School of English at Leeds University and the

Department of English Philology at Helsinki University. Some research into the teaching of English is also under way in departments of education in certain Finnish universities.

b. Bibliography

Please refer also to Survey of British support for English Studies in Finland 1976.

ELT Profile FINLAND

LITERATURE ANNEX December 1976

1. Status of Literature

In Finland English Literature is regarded as a foreign literature to be studied both for its own sake and as part of language teaching.

2. Literary Education

2.1 Children in Finland usually start learning English in their third year of school (about 9) and simplified texts are sometimes used as part of the lesson from about the fourth or fifth year of English onwards.

2.2 Finnish school children sit a matriculation examination in their thirteenth year at school, but neither the matriculation exam nor the earlier "Middle School" exam has any literature content.

2.3 There is a professional association of Teachers of English, but apart from the occasional lecture on literature given by a guest speaker, there is little or no literature activity within it.

2.4 The literature textbooks most widely used are: abridged selections included in locally-published textbooks. An enterprising teacher may also give a class holiday reading, eg Animal Farm.

School Leaving Standards are, on the whole, fairly high.

2.5 Percentage of undergraduates studying some English. A fairly large percentage of undergraduates is believed to study some English; however no official figures are available at present.

Percentage specialising in English. Just over 4% of the 76,000 studying at university level institutions, specialise in English. (The figure for the year 1975 is 2,700 students).

2.6 Organisation of Degree Courses in Literature. These vary somewhat from university to university. (For example - see appendix attached).

3. Literary Scene

3.1 Finnish/Swedish Literature is taught in schools. Very occasionally a Finnish writer may work in English, eg Ulla-Lena Lundberg. Students of Helsinki University have occasionally produced a magazine called First containing short stories and poems in English.

3.2 A wide range of British literature is translated into Finnish, from Shakespeare to the modern popular novel. The local publishing of material written in English is usually limited to school text-books for English language teaching.

3.3 There is a fairly wide selection of English literature texts available in public libraries and bookshops throughout the country.

APPENDIX

2.6 Organisation of degree courses in English Literature

HELSINKI UNIVERSITY

1st year (Approbatur)	Literary survey plus 8 set books.
3 from these:	Pride and Prejudice, Gulliver's Travels, Great Expectations, Huckleberry Finn, The Great Gatsby, Lord Jim.
5 from these:	My Family & Other Animals, The Bridge of San Luis Ray, The Catcher in the Rye, Lord of the Flies, The Sun Also Rises, Brave New World, Jane Eyre, Two Solitudes (MacLennan-Canadian), A Pattern of Islands.
2nd year (Cum Laude)	10 set books (19th & 20th century novels) plus 4 plays and 2 poets.
All these:	Wuthering Heights, Middlemarch, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Howards End, Sons and Lovers, Mrs Dalloway.
plus plays:	Way of the World, School for Scandal, Dr Faustus, The Caretaker.
2 from these:	Donne, Pope, Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Yeats, Hopkins.
One comedy & one tragedy out of:	Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, The Tempest, Henry IV (1), 12th Night, As You Like It.

At Cum Laude level 50% of pro-seminars study aspects of literature.

Final Year (Laudatur) selected from a list	Essays on writers. American Literature Survey (usually from a particular literary period.) A third Shakespeare play Milton, Chaucer Some Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Literature Short thesis - often on a literary subject.